



# 2008 CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

## PEOPLE TO PEOPLE STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAMS

Below are some guidelines to follow when communicating with others in a foreign country. See the **worldcitizens.org** website for more tips.

- Whenever possible, try to speak the local language. At a minimum, learn to say *hello*, *goodbye*, *please*, *thank you*, and *you're welcome*.
- It's important to learn the local word for bathroom. If you ask for it in English, you may be led to a room with a bathtub, wash basin, or shower, but not a toilet.
- Be specific and keep your language simple. Avoid slang words and contractions.
- Speak slowly, but not loudly! As people slow their language they tend to raise their volume.
- Remember that humor does not always translate into other cultures. Avoid telling jokes, especially ethnic ones.
- Remember that you are the one with the accent. Try to accommodate those you are speaking to by adapting to whatever they need. Use whatever means necessary to communicate: dictionaries, phrase books, gestures, body language, drawing pictures, etc. If others do not understand you, do not give up. Try, try again!
- If you are asked uncomfortable questions about the United States (political, human rights, current events, etc.), follow these simple rules:
  - Listen carefully to make sure you understand the question. Analyze the content of the question. Pause and think.
  - Sort out any over-generalizations and establish a thoughtful response. Respond only to relevant issues.
  - It is all right to disagree, to admit that you do not understand an issue, or to decline to discuss something that you find uncomfortable.
  - Do not feel as though you have to defend every decision made by the government or private industry in the United States.